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Irrigation

There are three irrigation projects on the Blackfeet Reservation, Two Medicine, Badger-Fisher and Birch Creek, which provide irrigation for an area of some 40,000 acres. The Bureau of Indian Affairs at Browning, Montana, estimates that an additional 15,000 acres could be irrigated if improvements were to be made in the existing projects. The U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Missouri River Basin Investigation Project, Report No. 140 (1954), and its supplements, deal comprehensively with the Blackfeet Reservation Irrigation Projects.

Wildlife

It is estimated by "agency" personnel that most Blackfeet Indian families who live on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation have available and utilize an average of two deer per year. Relatively few fish and elk are "taken," and these contribute but little to the over-all food production or consumption of the Blackfeet Reservation.

Agricultural Credit

The availability of credit to the Blackfeet Indians for agricultural production can be placed in three categories, regular commercial, regular governmental and specifically Indian.

The First National Bank of Browning, Montana, is not the only regular commercial source of credit to the Blackfeet Indians, but it is probably the most important. During 1961, it expected to make regular commercial agriculture production loans, totaling around $1,000,000, to Blackfeet Indians for cattle operations.

Data on the Production Credit Administration loans to Blackfeet Indians operating ranches on the Blackfeet Reservation are presented in Table 21.

TABLE 21. PRODUCTION CREDIT ADMINISTRATION LOANS TO BLACKFEET INDIANS

Year	Number of loans	Total amount	Amount delinquent
1956	6	$ 64,229	None
1957	9	$111,755	None
1958	11	$121,921	None
1959	11	$137,330	None
1960	11	$129,163	None

In addition to the above, a total of $50,000 is available to the Tribal Council for its special allocation to Indian ranchers.

The Farm and Home Administration has a total of twenty-one loans with the Blackfeet Indians on the Blackfeet Reservation. Several of these are fairly sizable loans for home construction and improvement.

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

scattered because of the limited food supply;[20] in summer, they "tended to collect and move about, both for trade and for the hunt."[21] Band endogamy was "not good form but not criminal."[22] Residence, in general, was patrilocal,[23] the young couple setting up their tipi alongside the groom's father's. It was not unusual, however, for a man to join his wife's band upon marriage.[24]

Equally significant in Blackfoot social organization were the men's societies[25] which had "certain names, fixed rules and laws, as well as their peculiar songs and dances" and which served "in part to preserve order in the camp, on the march, in the hunting parties."[26] As early as the 1830's, seven such "unions" were noted, their members usually joining the youngest and gradually rising higher through the others.[27] Entrance depended upon the payment of a fee, a medicine man and persons of distinction buying in at greater cost.[28]

These nomads, or "equestrian natives" as Cocking called them,[29] were particularly favored by circumstance. Their country was well stocked with the buffalo upon which they depended for food, shelter, and clothing; their early possession of the horse and the gun, and their comparative freedom from white pressure gave ample opportunity for effective hunting and substantial profit from an expanding fur trade. This profit was measured in horses. Not only did the horse become their most valued possession, but among them, as elsewhere on the Northern Plains, it formed the chief medium of exchange. Everything—trade goods, bride price, ceremonial privilege, and often personal support—was acquired by the payment of horses. In most instances, the loss of capital was only temporary: medicine bundles, pipes, and society memberships were actually investments[30] that could be resold, sometimes even at a profit, and distributions to maintain prestige were, in effect, convenient forms of credit. Expectancy is succinctly expressed in the oft-heard comment, "If a Blood gives a horse away one day,

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[21] *Idem.*
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[25] This is the term Wissler uses (See Wissler, *Blackfoot Societies*, Table of Contents, p. 363.)
[26] Maximilian, Prince of Weid-Neuweid, *Travels in the Interior of North America in the years of 1832–1833 and 1834*, p. 255.
[27] *Idem.*
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 256.
[29] Cocking, *op. cit.*, p. 110. Cf. also p. 111, for a statement on their more favorable situation.
[30] Wissler, *Ceremonial Bundles*, p. 277. Cf. also Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 44 ff.

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

657 owns his own farm and after it is broken for him, works it individually
425 without having any interest in the work or produce of any of the adjoining
243 farms. . . .[134] Out of the proceeds of the crop each Indian paid back to the
[407] trust fund all advances that had been made him including cost of breaking land, seed, fencing, granaries."[135]

● [452] Returns were immediate and large. Chief Running Antelope, who bought
243 out one of the other Indians[136] while the crop was growing and thus har-
434 vested eighty acres, had a cash balance of $1309.42 after paying all debts and advances. Emile Bull Shield came next with a net balance of $1203.59.
[425] Tallow took third place with clear profits of $1200.81.[137] By the end of the decade, many a young farmer was better off than the old established cattle herders.

434 The following table shows the amazing increase in income during this
178 decade of greatest participation:[138]

	1911	1914	1919	1929
Farm products, including hay.	$29,645	$24,000	$99,575	$110,000
Beef	11,549	14,348	60,000	59,929
Wages	13,432	17,751	35,000	50,000
Miscellaneous	2,124	5,001	39,171	34,403
Total income	$56,750	$61,100	$233,746	$254,332

464 In 1919, there were 4000 cattle (a substantial decrease from the figures
433 of 1906) and 3600 horses on the reserve; 2800 acres were sown, almost
[231] entirely in wheat, and 10,000 tons of hay were cut.[139] Due to World War I,
[458] all commodity prices were inflated and the returns from beef and farm products multiplied four times in as many years. Everyone prospered. Even the single men without herds or land had no difficulty in finding a job.

465 Sometimes a worker might be given a small share of the crop, sometimes
464 he might receive cash wages, but most frequently the remuneration offered by former herder or new farmer was not unlike that of the buffalo days. Says Pointed Plume,

> In the years I was building my herd and farming I hired Bob Sharp Cutter to help me. He was the son of my father's brother, Sharp Cutter. He was much younger

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[134] *Idem.*

[135] 1910, Vol. 17, p. 174.

[427] [136] Once assigned, land could be "sold" or "rented" by one Blood to another. Leases to whites were made only with the permission of the Agency and the native Council of Chiefs.

[137] 1910, Vol. 17, p. 174.

[138] 1911, Vol. 19, No. 27, Pt. 2, p. 24; 1914, Vol. 23, No. 27, Pt. 2, p. 1; 1919, Vol. 9, No. 27, Pt. 2, p. 68; 1920, Vol. 8, No. 27, Pt. 2, p. 76.

[139] 1919, Vol. 9, No. 27, p. 36.

428 requires acquiescence of many owners and the monies received must be
423 credited to the accounts of all heirs. Until more people make wills,
[427] and more frequently pass undivided ownership to fewer people, the land fragmentation will continue to snowball and the work load of the Agency increase in proportion.

426 The trust status of the land makes it poor security for mort-
423 gages, so it is difficult for the owner of such land to borrow money for short or long-term operating expenses and capital improvements. The inability to secure ready financing, the multiple ownership situation, and many other factors that will be introduced later, have contributed to the present economic condition of the tribal members.

433 On February 1, 1960, in an area in which the predominant in-
511 dustries are agriculture and stock raising, it was reported that only
[241] 40 tribal members are farm operators, and of this number it is estimated that perhaps only 10 per cent are farming sufficient acreage to be considered an economic unit. The farming family's income must be
[233] supplemented by wage work. One hundred and fifty families of tribal members are listed as ranchers, with an average of 85 head of beef cattle, or equivalent in sheep. A conservative estimate of the stock required for an economic unit is 100 head, so many of these people may also need supplemental income.

It was estimated that another 27 families are self-supporting, or have received the financing which should make them self-supporting, in business, other non-agricultural enterprises, or as regularly employed wage earners.

452 In a credit appraisal of an estimated 1,200 Blackfeet families, 700 families were listed as having poor security potential. Of these,

452 400 were further qualified as poor in character and poor security risks. These latter had neither the experience nor the aptitude, neither the training nor the inclination, to operate a going enterprise or meet the standards of financial responsibility set by the Council for prospective [434] clients of a Revolving Loan Fund.[49] These figures indicate that approxi- [511] mately 983 families of the tribe are unable to be self-supporting and depend upon casual labor, income from the leasing of lands if they have land, tribal per capita payments and welfare for minimum subsistence.

311 Figures on non-Indians use of reservation land reveal the gap
427 between Indian use and the potential of the region. Seventy-five
433 non-Indian operators lease grazing land for stock enterprises, with an average of 5,067 acres each as compared to an average acreage of 2,666 among the 150 Indian operators. One hundred seventy-five non-Indian farmers cultivate farms that average 560 acres each as compared to an average farm size of 200 acres for the 40 Indian farmers. The non-Indians are operating economic units on land leased from Indian owners. Many more Indian families could be self-supporting on their own land if problems of land ownership, financing, and training are ever solved.

Political and Legal Implications

631 The reservation and tribal organization bring a member into a
642 further regional political alignment, in many respects akin to a municipal political division. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1935 and

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[49] Unpublished documents of the Blackfeet Tribal Council, verified by the Loan Office of the Blackfeet Indian Agency.

16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Northern Blackfoot
Blackfoot Reserve

434 of as modal points along a continuum. All earn wages, but the propertyless individuals are those deriving the greatest fraction of their income from this source. All have aspiration levels, but the energetic earners may be inferred to have higher ones.

EXCHANGE

657 The agency is the main artery for conversion of the reserve
437 produce into cash. On the sale of a man's wheat his account is credited with the corresponding price. Similarly, when a steer is sold, the owner, determined by the animal's brand mark, is credited with the price received for the animal, less certain processing fees. Thus conversion of most reserve produce, whether it be horses or furs, passes through the agency.

The agency also converts various local vouchers into cash. Work slips, statements signed by a white staff member, entitle the bearer who has repaired a fence or worked two weeks on the roundup to a given sum of money. Merchandise orders are also given out to families caught short, so the white merchants come in for reimbursement. On the receipt of further cash these sums advanced will be deducted from the account of the Indian concerned, unless he is convalescent or in some other way unfitted for work.

657 The banking functions of the agency stop at this point. For
[452] example, beyond the advancing of credit in the form of merchandise
[426] orders, no credit is given. Loans are no longer made to individual Indians, nor does the agency directly finance with Indian funds individual undertakings. To be sure the agency purchases with trust
657 funds farm machinery, stallions, and lumber for Indian under-
422 takings, and for all practical purposes these may become the property of an individual. Yet things acquired in this way are not paid for by the individual and do not become his property in the sense that he is free to dispose of them.

657 There is an obvious scarcity of cash on the reserve despite these
454 exchange mechanisms. The individual accounts at the agency have been many times quickly emptied after pay-day. So, to encourage saving, the agency discourages withdrawal of more than a fraction of the total money in an account at any single time. Perhaps introduced in part with the same intention is the agency practice of paying from the accounts only on certain days of the week. It is a notorious source of friction that an Indian may come many miles